

quickly: The newly sprouting FM rock radio stations were all over it, playing every track of the **Paul Rothchild**-produced, Elektra LP and the small coterie of writers dabbling in the new field of rock criticism, save for a few, largely raved about the newness of what the Los Angeles quartet was doing. With the release of an edited version of "Light My Fire" in May, The Doors were well on their way to major stardom. Rhino's 50th anniversary package is stunning—its three CDs, vinyl album and liner notes (by **David Fricke**) housed in a hardcover 12" x 12" book-style jacket. The musical content, however, doesn't offer anything particularly new: The first two of three CDs feature the album's 11 tracks in their original stereo and mono mixes, albeit both newly remastered, while the third comprises the group's oft-circulated March 7, 1967, gig at San Francisco's Matrix, which is a classic in its own right. The vinyl, featuring the mono mix of the album, sounds bold and deep—let's just say if you still have your worn-out original, then this might be a good time to replace it. Most important, *The Doors* remains a seminal album in every way. Is it dated? Sure, somewhat. But it's still impossible to hear without remembering how shockingly brilliant it was, even in those endlessly intoxicating days. *Jeff Tamarkin*



The Beatles

by the impressive energy of the band and the timeless message of the songs. The best moments are the mid-range—full stage shots of the band playing "Who Are You?" and "My Generation"—especially when the 60-year-old Daltrey sings, "Hope I die before I get old," without a trace of irony. That said, Daltrey and Townshend still have the energy of men half their age. When they tear into "Won't Get Fooled Again," the years fall away and it feels like 1970 again. *J. Poet*

### The Beatles Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band 50th Anniversary Edition

APPLE CORP. LIMITED/CAPITOL/UME



For decades, **Beatles** fans have raged in the eternal debate of stereo versus mono. And both sides bring solid

ammunition to the fight: The original mono versions were band-sanctioned and more even-keeled, without the bizarre panning issues that make the stereo version so distracting. But by virtue of the medium, stereo brings more color and range, revealing more character in the voices and instruments. Well, consider the dilemma resolved—at least with the 50th anniversary edition of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. **Giles Martin** (son of iconic Beatles producer **George Martin**) and Abbey Road engineer **Sam Okell** arrive at a happy sonic medium with their stereo remix—fixing many a hole, one might say. Take the title-track: Instead of nonsensically hard-panning the band into the right channel, they push **Paul McCartney's** gritty rock shout dead-center, flanked by barbed-wire guitars in both speakers. The producers also added bold flourishes throughout, like **Ringo Starr's** booming tom-tom reverb on "With a Little Help From My Friends" and **John Lennon's** boosted acoustic guitar on "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds." Hardcore obsessives should seek out

the expansive, six-disc super deluxe box set, which boasts new 5.1 mixes, the 1992 documentary *The Making of Sgt. Pepper*, the original mono edition, in-depth liner notes and an array of alternate takes (34 of which are previously unreleased). The latter category is most crucial: Highlights include the bluesier fourth take on non-album single "Strawberry Fields Forever," Ringo pounding the shit out of his kit on an instrumental warm-up of "Good Morning Good Morning" and **George Harrison** intimately coaching the dilruba player via vocal sounds in a run-through of "Within You Without You." It's essential listening. *Ryan Reed*

### Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen

Live From Ebbetts Field, Denver, CO, Aug. 11 1973 **ROCK BEAT**



You don't usually see words like revolutionary or rebellious applied to **Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen**,

yet this was a band that defied just about every convention during its all-too-brief run. While many others were dabbling in neo-country-rock during the late '60s/early '70s, this octet didn't attempt to gloss up the form. The ingredients of their particular stew included the rawer honky-tonk of the late '40s and '50s, steaming boogie-woogie (powered by namesake pianist **George "Commander Cody" Frayne**), real-deal rockabilly, Cajun and Western swing, truck-driving songs and a taste of the blues and R&B. It was all presented with honest reverence but sans the way-too-serious poker face that so many other bands applied to roadhouse-revival music at the time. This set, a 21-track live gig from Colorado, was recorded more than a year after Cody and crew had a Top-10 single with "Hot Rod Lincoln" (which, refreshingly, isn't even played here). It also finds the crew—among whom were guitar great **Bill Kirchen**,

guitarist **Bobby Black**—tearing up the house with swinging rockers like "Ain't Nothing Shaking" and "Rock That Boogie," weepers "Mama Hated Diesels" and "Wine, Do Yer Stuff," and covers of rock-and-roll classics like "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" and "Good Rockin'." It's all a big blast, good-time music personified, expertly played, and, unlike a lot of other contemporaneous back-to-the-roots music that now sounds precious and overly earnest, it holds up today due to its utter unpretentiousness.

*Jeff Tamarkin*

### Clear Blue Sky Clear Blue Sky **ESOTERIC**

### Second Hand Death May Be Your Santa Claus

**ESOTERIC**



During the British-prog boom of the early '70s, as label executives scurried to discover the next Yes or King Crimson, hundreds of bizarre bands snatched their elusive shot at rock glory. Most fizzled out after one or two albums,

forming an obscure treasure trove for crate diggers and eBay swappers. Luckily, Esoteric Recordings continue to dig up these long-buried gems for reissue, and two of their latest offerings—**Clear Blue Sky's** lone, self-titled 1970 LP and **Second Hand's** 1971 oddity, *Death May Be Your Santa Claus*—may prove to be pleasant surprises even for the most seasoned prog junkie. Recorded by a hard-hitting trio of 18 year olds, *Clear Blue Sky* (housed in one of Yes cover artist **Roger Dean's** most bewitching sleeves) is amateurish in execution but majestic in ambition—nailing that rare sweet spot between psychedelia, proto-metal and symphonic grandeur. "Sweet Leaf" (no relation to the Black Sabbath track) mingles bong-blasted tremolo guitar with boogie-rock rhythms and rippling fuzz solos; elsewhere, the group dabbles in spacey synth doodles (the face-melting "I'm Comin' Home"), atmospheric drones ("My Heaven") and Jethro Tull-ish jazz flute ("Birdcatcher"). While *Clear Blue Sky's* wide-ranging attack feels like the work of earnest lads with big imaginations, *Second Hand* mostly just sound like nutcases. *Santa Claus* is their second and final LP—and what a weird fugue curtain call. Balancing a Zappa-esque absurdity with ELP-style virtuosity, the band veers from the symphonic keyboard density (the mellotron-stuffed "Hangin' on an Eyelid") to Krautrock electronics ("Take to the Skies") to post-psychedelic silliness ("Cyclops"). That wild unpredictability makes the album worth exploring—not just for proggers but for any irreverent rock fan. *Ryan Reed*

### The Who Live at the Isle of Wight Festival 2004 **EAGLE ROCK**



The Who's performance on the Isle of Wight in 1970, filmed by director Murray Lerner and later released as a home

video, was a high point in the band's early career. Thirty-four years later, the two surviving members of the group returned to the festival for the two-hour performance captured on this DVD. The set is a collection of the band's hits, opening with "I Can't Explain" and closing with a sedate version of "Magic Bus." Guitarist **Simon Townshend**, bassist **Pino Palladino**, drummer **Zak Starkey** and keyboardist **John "Rabbit" Bundrick** are a monster support band, but director **Matt Askem** keeps the focus on the two principles. You're closer to **Roger Daltrey** and **Pete Townshend** here than you could ever be in a concert setting, but extreme close ups of Daltrey's sweaty face and Townshend's fingernails as he plays a shredding solo don't make the performance any more exciting. The energy flags a bit during a three-song acoustic segment, about half way through the two-hour show, but most of the time you're transported